

DECISION RECORD

for

Pompeys Pillar Interpretive Center
EA/Amendment

EA Number MT-010-1-38

Bureau of Land Management
Billings Field Office
Billings, Montana

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mat Millenbach', is positioned above a horizontal line.

Mat Millenbach
State Director

INTRODUCTION

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) proposes to implement a management decision contained in the 1996 Pompeys Pillar Environmental Assessment (EA)/Amendment, with a focus on constructing an interpretive center at Pompeys Pillar. Since the 1996 plan was completed, BLM considered a proposal to co-locate the interpretive center with a Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) highway rest area. In addition, new information has been identified which points to the need to re-evaluate the size of the center, as well as other decisions. These include the season of use, delineating where within the Historic Zone - Developed the center and related infrastructure would be constructed; and whether the existing visitor center and related facilities should be removed.

Copies of the Pompeys Pillar Interpretive Center EA/Amendment, EA MT 010-1-38, are available from the BLM Billings Field Office and on the BLM website at www.mt.blm.gov.

DECISION

It is my decision to proceed with the components of Alternative B that will amend the 1996 Pompeys Pillar ACEC Environmental Assessment and Decision Record. Those actions that will amend the Billings Resource Area Management (as amended) are:

- (1) The size of the interpretive center;
- (2) Removing the existing visitor center out of the Historic Zone;
- (3) Flexibility with the season of use.

Management direction pertinent to this decision is briefly described below. Refer to the 1996 and 2001 documents for more detail.

Size of Interpretive Center: The interpretive center will be approximately 6,900 square feet, with the potential for future expansion. Phase-in components to the center will be a function of funding and visitation. Development will not exceed the level of development analyzed and approved in 1996.

Removing the existing visitor center out of the Historic Zone: By removing the existing visitor center and related infrastructure, the historic setting will be more natural in the Historic Zone, thereby creating a more pristine area. This will enhance the visitors' enjoyment and appreciation of the area. Removal of the existing facilities also eliminates the visual impacts of development in the Historic Zone and brings the area into compliance with floodplain regulations.

Flexibility with Season of Use: This decision provides the opportunity to staff the facility year-round, contingent upon funding and visitor demands. Staffing the interpretive center year-round may enhance visitor experience and reduce the potential for resource damage.

RATIONALE FOR DECISION

I base my decision on the analysis contained in the 2001 Pompeys Pillar EA/Amendment and corresponding case file. Alternative B provides the most flexibility to meet changing visitor demands, maintains the historical and cultural values of the site, provides a high quality visitor experience and accommodates budgetary constraints. The 2001 Pompeys Pillar EA/Amendment included additional activity-level planning information, analysis and mitigation regarding the interpretive center proposal. The activity-level decisions will be identified and documented in a separate decision (attached).

PROTEST RESOLUTION

BLM received two letters protesting the proposed action. The issues and concerns raised in each of the letters are briefly summarized.

The first protest raised issues/concerns pertaining to the amount of land delineated for the Historic Zone, locating the center by Highway 312 and the need to address zoning and easements on adjacent lands.

The second protest letter raised issues/concerns regarding the adequacy of the existing visitor contact station, over-estimating visitation projections, specificity and level of detail provided for VRM guidelines and specificity regarding the placement and actual design of the facilities. The letter also concluded that the BLM should conduct an environmental impact statement.

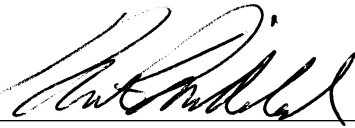
Both protest letters expressed concern over the proposed building of the grain elevators on private property to the south of the Pillar. However, BLM has no authority to manage private property. The issues raised from both protest letters were analyzed by the BLM Washington Office. It was determined that there was no basis for changing the proposed action.

IMPLEMENTATION

This decision can be implemented immediately. Implementation and timeframes will be contingent upon final budgets.

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI)

On the basis of the information contained in the 2001 Pompeys Pillar EA/Amendment and all other information available to me, it is the determination of the Bureau the amendment to the Billings Resource Management Plan will have no significant impact on the human environment. An environmental impact statement does not need to be prepared.

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Mat Millenbach
State Director